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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that on Monday, in a telephone consultation, the members of the Quartet decided to maintain their embargo on direct aid to the PA government. Leading media reported that

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice expressed concern over

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Palestinian PM Ismail Haniyeh's insistence on the "right to resistance" in his initial policy speech. The radio and other media quoted Secretary Rice as saying on Monday: "I am not going to try to interpret what the right of resistance means, but I'll tell you it doesn't sound very good to me when one talks about all forms of resistance. So I would put the question to the Palestinian government and to its Prime Minister: Do you mean the right of resistance by violence? And let's get an answer." The Secretary was speaking with reporters. Israel Radio quoted a senior GOI source as saying that Rice does not even attempt to deal with interpretation.

All media reported that on Monday Hamas took responsibility for shooting and moderately wounding an Israeli civilian at the Karni Crossing along the Gaza Strip border, while in Sinai Egyptian troops caught a Hamas activist from Gaza, who reportedly planned a suicide attack in Israel. Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post quoted senior GOI sources as saying on Monday that Hamas's attack proves that the organization has not changed or modified its ways but is persisting in terror acts. Ha'aretz reported that a senior Israeli defense source told the daily on Monday following the attack: "The time for talk is over. If the cease-fire disruptions persist, the IDF will react harshly against the Palestinian terror organizations." Ha'aretz said that the attack could be related to the formation of the Palestinian national unity government on Saturday. Senior Hamas officials have said in the past that they would not give up the organization's right to "resist occupation" -- that is, to engage in violence. A limited terror attack like the one carried out on the Gaza Strip border demonstrates Hamas's ability to act, while not being serious enough to evoke a sharp Israeli protest. However, Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Palestinian defense sources suggested another explanation for the attack. They were quoted as saying that two commanders of Hamas's military wing, Jamal al-Jarah and Yusuf al-Zahar, brother of former FM Mahmoud Zahar, were responsible for the attacks. Ha'aretz quoted MK Tzachi Hanegbi (Kadima), the chair of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, as saying on Monday that a military confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians in the near future was inevitable, adding that "only a miracle could prevent it."

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday, in an interview with VOA-TV, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed disappointment with the new PA unity government.

Leading media reported that on Monday dozens of settlers moved into an unoccupied Palestinian building in Hebron, saying it was legally purchased from its Palestinian owner for USD 700,000. The building is located near the "worshiper's way," close to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the Israeli-controlled part of the city. Israel Radio reported that a Palestinian lodged a complaint with the police, bringing documents proving his ownership of the building.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, fearing for their lives, EU monitors stationed at the Rafah Crossing that connects the Gaza Strip and Egypt have asked the Israeli defense establishment for help in drawing up escape routes from Gaza in the event of an attack on the border terminal.

Maariv's Washington correspondent reported that Jewish US Congressman Robert Wexler (D-FL) is likely to introduce a law that would include Israel and other countries in the Visa-Waiver Program. Wexler reportedly cited the support that many countries, including Israel, have given the US after the 9/11 disaster.

All media reported that on Monday the Ministerial Committee for Symbols and Ceremonies decided that last summer's conflict in Lebanon should officially be called a war.

Ha'aretz reported that, an interview published on Monday in the Saudi newspaper Al-Jazeera, Syrian President Bashar Assad confirmed that Syria has been conducting secret negotiations with Israel in recent years, as reported by Ha'aretz in January. Assad was quoted as saying that international envoys had shuttled between Syria and Israel, carrying each country's point of view regarding peace to the other. Assad added that nothing concrete had come out of the talks,

especially as "the current Israeli government is the weakest in Israel's history." Major media cited that particular remark. "There's an American administration without a vision, and the US administration, unfortunately, is central to all peace processes in the region," he added. He also called the US the main obstacle to a Middle East peace. Maariv highlighted the part of the interview in which Assad said that war is always an option in the region.

Leading media reported that the US granted an entry visa to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who plans to address the UN Security Council regarding the issues of stiffer sanctions that may be imposed on his country. Leading electronic media quoted The New York Times as saying on Monday that Russia has told Iran that it will withhold fuel for Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant unless Tehran suspends its uranium enrichment program as the UN Security Council demands. The Jerusalem Post quoted opposition leader MK Binyamin Netanyahu as saying on Monday that the window of opportunity to measure the effect of severe economic sanctions against Iran in an effort to stop its nuclear program is not much more than one year. Maariv reported that on Monday the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency began an English-language Internet campaign meant to arouse international consciousness to the anti-Semitic character of the Iranian regime and to enlist hundreds of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish Net surfers in their struggle.

Ha'aretz, Maariv, and The Jerusalem Post cited a claim presented in a report drafted by Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), an organization that monitors Palestinian Arabic-language media and schoolbooks, that new textbooks for 12th-grade Palestinian students reject the existence of Israel and make no attempt to educate students about peace or coexistence. Maariv underscored Holocaust denial in the schoolbooks. According to the group, the textbooks were written by the Center for Developing the Palestinian Curricula and introduced by the PA at the end of 2006. The primary findings of PMW's report will be presented to the Knesset's Education and Culture Committee today.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the US-backed Iraqi government is enforcing the Arab boycott of Israel with increasing frequency. The Jerusalem Post reported that an official at the US Embassy in Tel Aviv told the newspaper: "The US government is continuing to review this matter." The newspaper said that Iraq officials were unavailable for comment. However, The Jerusalem Post reported that a State Department spokesman told the newspaper that Washington was "disappointed" over Iraq's decision to participate in the boycott of Israel, and quoted him as saying that American officials had "raised this issue with Iraqi officials in the past and expect to raise it with them again."

The Jerusalem Post reported that a seven-person Turkish technical team is scheduled to arrive on Tuesday to look at the excavations at the Mugrabi Gate outside the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, more than a month after Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan suggested the idea to PM Ehud Olmert during the latter's visit to Ankara. The team is slated to meet with representatives of the Israeli Antiquities Authority on Wednesday and the Muslim Waqf on Thursday. The Jerusalem Post quoted Turkish officials as saying that the team will then return to Turkey and write a report to be presented to Erdogan.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Egyptian FM Ahmed Ali Abu al-Gheit called claims in Israel that Egyptian soldiers killed Israeli prisoners during the Yom Kippur War "absurd."

Yediot reported that, following Monday's attack at the Karni Crossing, employees of the Israel Electric Corporation independently decided to temporarily interrupt the power supply to the Gaza Strip in protest against the wounding of one of their comrades.

Yediot reported that on Monday the World Union for Progressive Judaism ("Reform Judaism"), which held a convention in Jerusalem, contributed 100 million to Israel.

Yediot reported on the first member of the Black Hebrew Israelite community who became an IDF officer.

Maariv reported that a group of French Jews is urging the US Congress to legislate a law that would grant French Jews political

asylum in the US, following what the group says are rising anti-Semitism and ethnic prosecution in France.

Maariv and Israel Radio reported that Israeli and Jewish immigrant organizations are hosting a convention on immigration and immigrant absorption, in which representatives of more than 20 countries, including Ethiopia, Russia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Georgia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Nigeria

Ha'aretz printed an AP wire report citing the Israeli defense company Elbit Systems as saying on Monday that small Israeli pilotless planes are gathering intelligence for US-led forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. AP wrote that a CENTCOM official would not confirm the use of the drone.

All media reported that security forces will carry out an extensive drill across the country Israel today to test the defense capabilities of the army, police, rescue forces, and local authorities. As part of the drill, which will continue into Wednesday, an air raid siren will sound in all parts of the country at 2 P.M.

Ha'aretz cited a recent survey by the World Union for Progressive Judaism showing that more than half of Israeli Jews support the right of Diaspora Jews to criticize Israel on particular issues.

Ha'aretz cited the results of a University of Haifa poll according to which only 5 percent of Israelis are unhappy with the country's political system.

Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "[The Palestinians] are trying to fool Israel and the world into believing that it is possible to do business with Abu Mazen while ignoring Ismail Haniyeh, who holds the real power in Palestinian politics."

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Those who support recognizing all or part of the Hamas-Fatah terror government are in breach of international law and of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, which bars member states from financing terrorists and those giving them safe harbor. There is no peace process, only a war process."

Yehuda Lancry, former Likud Knesset member and former ambassador to France, wrote in Maariv: "Mutual recognition, the very basis of the Oslo Accords, cannot put up with ambiguity."

Gershon Baskin, the Co-Director of the Israel-Palestine Center for Information and Research (IPCRI), wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "Arguing about the virtues of recognizing the new Palestinian government is a waste of time. Wasting time now is criminal. Now is the time for an Israeli peace initiative."

Block Quotes:

I. "Self-Delusion"

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (3/20): "The artificial distinction between Abu Mazen and the Hamas government headed by Ismail Haniyeh, but in reality by Khaled Mashal, ignores reality. If the Chairman is capable of inducing Hamas to accept the principles of the Roadmap and the Oslo agreement, so much the better, then it would be worth while for Israel to talk to it. But when Haniyeh declares, on the establishment of the government, that terrorism will continue and the 'right of return' remains in force, what does Abu Mazen have in his empty hands? It's the same lady in a different guise, hiding behind a diplomatic facade, aimed at opening the pockets of the Europeans. The Palestinians are now taking their first sovereign

steps. They are trying to fool Israel and the world into believing that it is possible to do business with Abu Mazen while ignoring Ismail Haniyeh, who holds the real power in Palestinian politics. Israel has to cry out to the entire world that Abu Mazen and Ismail Haniyeh are one and the same. Together they have to choose what course they are going to take. It would be inadmissible for each to go in a different direction and for Israel to be fooled into following one of them. The test lies in the release of Gilad Shalit.... Is this the Abu Mazen who prepared the joint statement by himself and Dr. Yossi Beilin? Or is it the Abu Mazen who at Camp David incited Yasser Arafat to reject the generous peace offered by Barak?.... In order to reach the distant goal [of peace], Israel has to stand firm in the opening stage. It is almost essential to wipe out the basic Arab premise that pressure and patience will always wear down Israel's position. This erosion is necessary precisely for promotion of peace, and not the madness in which the Defense Minister votes in favor of the boycott of the Hamas government, while giving up the essential stage of abrogation of terrorism, almost in the same breath."

II. "'Your Money and Your Life'"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (3/20): "Faced with complete rejection of their minimal conditions, the Israeli Left, the Europeans and the State Department took the only step they could possibly take: They ignored everything the Palestinians said and did. Confronted by the Palestinians' absolute commitment to terror and extortion, they have closed their eyes and moved to embrace the fantasy that there is a deal to be made with the Palestinians.... For its part, the State Department, while stipulating that it won't speak to Hamas, is more than happy to speak with Fatah ministers who flack for Hamas. The Americans' favorite terror financier and recycled PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad will be visiting Washington later in the week. In one of his most recent exploits, Fayyad oversaw the disappearance of USD 100 million in tax revenue that Israel transferred to Abbas's office. The Palestinians could not be clearer about their demands.... Indeed, a reading of 60-year-old documents shows that little of substance has changed since Palestinian Arabs first resorted to terror to foil the emergence of a Jewish state.... The only thing that can be done in the face of this historically consistent depravity is to finally declare that the jig is up. Those who support recognizing all or part of the Hamas-Fatah terror government are in breach of international law and of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, which bars member states from financing terrorists and those giving them safe harbor. There is no peace process, only a war process. And if we do not recognize this fact and fight, we shall soon begin to bury more innocents whose lives will be sacrificed because we were too stubborn to acknowledge reality."

III. "The Test of Recognition"

Yehuda Lancry, former Likud Knesset member and former ambassador to France, wrote in Maariv (3/20): "Mutual recognition, the very basis of the Oslo Accords, cannot put up with ambiguity.... Mutual recognition made many Israelis change their views.... It is a process that the Palestinians, too, must share, because there is no basis for making peace without it.... As one of the Palestinian architects of the Oslo Accords, Abu Mazen understands perfectly the importance of mutual recognition. It is obvious to him that without it Yitzhak Rabin would not have signed agreements. It is also clear to him that an Israel headed by Olmert will not cooperate with a government that refuses to recognize it. It would have been better if some European Union countries, which hasten to support Ismail Haniyeh's government, helped Abu Mazen bring Hamas into the alliance of mutual recognition with Israel. France, an EU member, which is interested in having the Palestinian unity government recognized, should more vigorously work in favor of mutual recognition as the unshakeable basis of Israeli-Palestinian relations."

IV. "An Imaginary Announcement"

Gershon Baskin, the Co-Director of the Israel-Palestine Center for Information and Research (IPCRI), wrote in The Jerusalem Post (3/20): "Israeli cabinet statement, March 25, 2007, regarding the Arab summit in Riyadh:.... 'While recognizing the need for mutually-agreed adjustment to the boundaries between Israel and the

future State of Palestine, Israel recognizes that the basis for negotiations over boundaries is the Green Line armistice agreement of 1949'.... The above does not have to be an imaginary report. Everything written above is acceptable to almost all of the ministers of the Israeli government.... Should the Palestinian masses reject the solution of two states in favor of one democratic state from the river to the sea, it is only a matter of time before the entire international community comes to their support, and then the end of the Zionist dream is in sight. If the Palestinian masses adopt the one-state democratic solution, Israel cannot win that battle. And although an unimaginable amount of blood would be spilled, in the end Israel would no longer be the state of the Jewish people. Those Israeli nationalists and their supporters abroad -- Jews and non-Jews alike, who reject peace with our neighbors -- are nothing less than suicide bombers aiming to destroy Israel. This may seem to some to be a gross exaggeration, but it is not. Those who reject the risks of making peace are guaranteeing the demise of Israel by their blindness and failure to understand that time is not in our favor. Arguing about the virtues of recognizing the new Palestinian government is a waste of time. Wasting time now is criminal. Now is the time for an Israeli peace initiative. Olmert, kadima! -- forward. Your time is running out."

JONES